

Faculty of Philosophy
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**'There was one group called Laps at that time which was doing reindeer herding and these were the only ones in Sweden, and they were the Laps.' -
(Dis-)Continuities of Creating Unambiguousness in Laponia, Sweden**

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Intercultural Communication and Education

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1. Introduction

In her work on creating and managing the World Heritage site *The Laponian Area*, Carina Green quotes Ulf Mörkenstam to underline the firm connection between rights and identities. Mörkenstam states: "[B]y defining who is entitled to what, politics constitutes identities" (Mörkenstam 2002 in Green 2009, 50). The granting of rights, as conceptualised by Mörkenstam, not only shapes the identities of the right's addressees; it even produces identities. How does this production of identity through politics take shape in the context of the *The Laponian Area*? What logics does the UNESCO follow when it ascribes World Heritage status to nature and to cultural practices? What are the obvious and the subtle assumptions and requests underlying their practice of picking out certain aspects of a multitude of cultural expressions and not others? And, ultimately, in how far does the UNESCO continue to pursue mechanisms known as characterising the relation between Sámi and the Swedish state, namely the confident definition of who and what is *traditionally* and *authentically* Sámi?

Through my participation in the UNESCO World Heritage research class 2019/20 and in particular during my three-week-long stay in Sweden in September 2019 I followed around these questions. It goes without saying that such a short period of research time is in no way sufficient to fully grasp the connections and complexities that characterise this field. Therefore, this report can be understood as a first explorative approach, a first trial to find a way through some of the different perspectives the ascription of Lapponia provokes. For this purpose, this report is structured as follows. At first, I will give an introduction to the context, the historical and theoretical background of my occupation with Lapponia as well as to the research design and data collection. I will then go into one of the topics I found most interesting while evaluating the data I collected in Lapponia, namely what I call the "Creation of Unambiguousness": the practice of defining a clear-cut ethnic identity including a specific profession and how this profession has to be executed in order to be *authentic*. A discussion of my results, including a preview of possible future work on this topic, will round the report off.

2. Context and Historical Background: Sámi, Lapponia and the Swedish state

The Laponian Area was awarded World Heritage status in 1996 as the result of the third, revised application the Swedish National Heritage Board (SNHB) submitted to the World Heritage Committee. As Carina Green (2009, 102) points out, pragmatic thoughts influence nearly every World Heritage application. Marketing opportunities, international recognition, an increase of

tourist numbers and of workplaces are incentives that at least push, if not massively guide the submission of World Heritage applications (cf. *ibid.*). Accordingly, the applications themselves are often pragmatic in that they feature exactly the aspects that sell well and that are highly-regarded by the deciding actors. This holds true for Lapponia as well.

In the case of Lapponia, there were three applications. The very first application for a World Heritage in the north of Sweden was submitted in the 1980s by the Swedish government and included - based on natural criteria only - solely the nature reserve Sjaunja (*ibid.*, 103). Rejected by the World Heritage Committee because 'it lacked exceptionality', a second application, again on the grounds of natural criteria only, was prepared and drafted in 1995 (*ibid.*). While the municipalities at that time feared restrictions regarding outdoor activities for the local people, the Sámi Parliament was afraid of future severe limitations to reindeer herding (*ibid.*). Moreover, the proposed title "'The Lapponian Wilderness Area'" led to discomfort under the Sámi people. The area in question was inhabited by Sámi 'from time immemorial' and thus constitutes a cultural landscape and anything but a wilderness (*ibid.*). In the end, it was a person from the Ministry of Education, Research and Culture who got into contact with the SNHB and hinted to the deficiency of not including cultural criteria. It was only then that the SNHB approached the Sámi museum in Jokkmokk, Ájtte, as well as the chair of the Sámi Parliament to see if they were interested in adding Sámi as a cultural part to the application (*ibid.*). Both parties agreed. The inclusion of Sámi culture coincided with what could be called a paradigmatic turn inside UNESCO, namely the involvement of "'living cultures'" and intangible heritage in World Heritage (*ibid.*). Against this backdrop, the inclusion of Sámi culture can be assessed as a pragmatic decision made to increase the chances of a successful application and not as a confident appreciation of Sámi culture.

Lapponia now constitutes one of thirty-nine UNESCO sites, that currently hold both World Cultural and World Natural Heritage status. Although recommended by the World Heritage secretariat, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), it was not designated a Cultural Landscape which constitutes another category used by the World Heritage Committee. This would have meant a loss of power over the region and the process for the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), since the SNHB would have controlled the further procedure. The SEPA was not willing to accept this after all the work they had put into the two preceding applications. The impression that the natural criteria are valued more important than the cultural criteria by many actors continued (*ibid.* 104). I will now introduce you to the criteria

the UNESCO ultimately chose to make Lapponia a World Heritage site by providing you with a close-reading of the passages I found to be essential for the occupation with my research question. As for every single World Heritage site, these criteria can be found online via <http://whc.unesco.org>.

In the introduction to the criteria for Lapponia, it says that the Arctic Circle region is 'the largest area in the world (and one of the last) with an *ancestral* way of life based on the seasonal movement of livestock. Every summer, the Saami lead their huge herds of reindeer towards the mountains through a natural landscape hitherto preserved, but now *threatened* by the advent of motor vehicles' (UNESCO, my own emphasis). This introduction immediately sets the scene for the logic underlying the World Heritage project in general and definitely the ascription of Lapponia: There is a valuable, in some way *ancient* site, piece of nature and/or cultural practice that is in danger now and therefore in need of preservation. In the case of Lapponia, one half of this valuable good that demands protection is nature:

The Lapponian Area, located in northernmost Sweden, is a magnificent wilderness of high mountains, primeval forests, vast marshes, beautiful lakes and well-preserved river systems. It contains areas of exceptional beauty such as the snow-covered mountains of Sarek, the large alpine lakes of Padjelanta/Badjelánnda, and the extensive river delta in the Rapa Valley. Ongoing geological, biological and ecological processes have formed a variety of habitats conserving a rich biodiversity, including many species of fauna and flora typical of the northern Fennoscandian region (ibd.).

Regarding the other half, the cultural criteria, UNESCO's clear understanding of the temporality of culture and of certain cultural practices becomes obvious. Here it says:

Pastoral transhumance landscapes of this kind were *at one time* common throughout the northern hemisphere. However, these *ancestral* ways of life, based on the seasonal movement of livestock, have been rendered *obsolete* or been *abandoned* in many parts of the world, making the property one of the last and among the largest and best preserved of those few that survive (ibd., my own emphasis).

UNESCO leaves no doubt that it marks an area and a practice, that 'dates back to *an early stage* in human economic and social *development*' and that constitutes '*traditional* landuse' (ibid., my own emphasis).

Justifying their decision on the one hand upon the emphasis of the property's integrity, UNESCO underlines that 'the on-going practice of reindeer herding has adjusted to modern techniques, but [...] is still the main source of livelihood in this area' (ibd.). On the other hand, the cultural practice of reindeer herding appears to be equally central for Lapponia's authenticity, since the latter is 'maintained through the continuing Saami practice of reindeer herding' (ibid.). But reindeer herding, as presented here, is not only essential for the site's integrity and authenticity. It also constitutes the 'fundamental condition for the survival of the Saami culture'

(ibid.). This wording suggests that reindeer herding is not only the centre of the entirety of Sámi culture and life, but also the basis of its survival, which touches upon the aspect of threatened culture again. And the reindeer herding has to stay the same in order to continue to fulfil its important role as the carrier of Sámi culture. The UNESCO diagnoses that

the use of motorized transport by Saami herders is [...] a more recent phenomenon. It can be argued that this is no more than an application of technological developments for a traditional purpose, but it does have a potentially deleterious and irreversible impact on the natural environment and needs to be addressed through management actions (ibid.).

This passage is interesting regarding the prioritisation of nature's integrity over culture's authenticity as well as the underlying assumptions about Sámi's relationship to their land and to nature. The use of e-scooters, helicopters and so on poses a threat to the natural integrity and therefore needs 'management actions'. Again, the protection and intactness of nature gets prioritised over culture. Possible changes in the execution of reindeer herding are depreciated. Rather it is demanded that the cultural practice of reindeer herding gets executed in a specific way that does not harm the environment. As I will later present, this goes hand in hand with a particular image of indigenous peoples as being especially environmentally-friendly while the world around them adopts technical novelties.

Before turning to the theoretical background, I want to point out a couple of historical events which can be assessed as characterising the relation between Sámi and the Swedish state and which will turn out to be highly relevant for the occupation with my research question. These events are all testimonies of the relation between a state and an indigenous people that was - and sometimes continues to be - marked by a state exercising power as well as colonial attitudes and practices over an ethnic minority. The question that is most relevant for this project is which policies determined who is regarded as Sámi and who is not, and which partly enormous and painful consequences emerged out of these divisions.

For an account of the relation between Sámi and the Swedish state, an emphasis clearly must be put on the various Reindeer Herding Acts the Swedish state passed between 1886 and 1993. The Reindeer Herding Act of 1886 organised the reindeer herding Sámi in official "lappbys", thus requiring individuals to herd their reindeer only within the borders of their "lappby" instead of self-organised (Green 2009, 48). Nevertheless, neither this act, nor its revised version from 1898 defined who is called a Sámi in the first place, since this was 'more or less self-evident' at that time (ibid.). Lineage, language and other cultural traits must have been seen as clearly defining Sáminess and therefore not demanding any further explanation. The allocation to either Sámi or Swedish inhabitants appeared as simply not relevant as Green

points out: 'Many settlers were of Sámi origin, and many Swedes were at least partly engaged in reindeer herding' (ibid.). Until 1928 any Sámi was entitled to herd reindeer although far from every Sámi used this right and the ones who did had - just as the farming settler families as well - other revenues, too (ibid.). Nevertheless, the Sámi that chose fishing and hunting as their main source of income were confronted with the fact that the act of 1886 ascribed the right to hunt and fish within the borders of a lappby solely to the reindeer herding Sámi. This circumstance, in turn, can be seen as a very first definition of what constitutes a *real* Sámi, namely a person that is involved in reindeer herding. Moreover, it was a strategic move by the Swedish state as Beach underlines: 'It is easy to see how the misconception that real Saamis are only herders and that herding is the only true occupation of Saamis was not simply a mistake born of ignorance, but rather a necessity for the colonial exploitation of resources and the introduction of the right of Swedish settlers on the same land' (Beach 1981 in Green 2009, 49). The decision to grant Sámi the right to herd reindeer but not to both herd and farm stems from two reasons. On the one hand, any other decision would have brought Sámi advantages compared to Swedish settlers, which has never been in the interest of the state. On the other hand, it would have blurred the imagined clear-cut line between the reindeer herding Sámi and the settled Swedes (cf. ibid.). As Beach determines: 'The State, faced with decreasing herder-settler compatibility, might be increasingly willing to undermine the value of herding rights [...], but, if so, it was to be done on occupational grounds, through the assimilation of Saamis and for the benefit of the settled life and higher civilisation, and not for the benefit of the Saamish people *per se*.' (ibid., emphasis in the original). Privileging Sámi over Swedes was simply not what the Swedish state aimed at. The latter rather worked to facilitate a completely nomadic lifestyle since this characterised the *real*, the *right* form of reindeer herding, exercised by mountain Sámi, instead of a mix of herding and farming, done by many of the forest Sámi (cf. Green 2009, 50). The alleged conflict over resources between Sámi and Swedish settlers further strengthened the state's tendency to promote the fully nomadic Sámi lifestyle and the Swedish settled life but nothing in-between (ibid.). It becomes clear: The state had a very clear understanding of the *pure* Sámi lifestyle and practices which was seen as not compatible with the reality of Sámi doing both reindeer herding and farming. In consequence, the state demanded the forest Sámi to either readopt nomadism or become settlers, thus 'collektiviz[ing] and homogeniz[ing] the Sami people' (ibid., 50).

As already suggested, Green names both the conflict over resources and a Social Darwinist mindset as reasons for the state's policies regarding Sámi rights at that time (ibid.,

49). Constituting the nomadic reindeer herding Sámi as the exact counterpart to the Swedish farming society, the Swedish state clearly followed the 'Lapp should be Lapp' attitude, stemming from an often-cited phrase coined by the Swedish vicar and elementary school teacher Vitalis Karnell (ibid., 51). The nation state protected Sámi on the basis of their firm assumption, that their 'lower level of culture' would not survive (ibid.). As Beach points out: 'In effect, Saami herders were approved of and tolerated, with the conviction what they would not last, and Saami settlers were also approved of as long as they shared no special rights along with the herders to give them an edge over Swedish settlers. What was not approved of was any type of transitional form between herding and farming (the combination)' (Beach 1981 in Green 2009, 51).

This division was confirmed in the Reindeer Herding Act of 1928, here defining a Sámi as someone who holds the right to reindeer herding - and no one else (Green 2009, 51). Sámi who did not fall under this category not only lost their official status of being Sámi but oftentimes also forfeited their Sámi identity, adopting Swedish names and speaking Swedish instead of Sámi (ibid., 52). Moreover, Sámi women would lose their reindeer herding rights when marrying a man without these rights (ibid.). And this division continued to shape Sámi identity in the Reindeer Herding Act of 1971. It was only in the Act of 1993 that the right to reindeer herding became a 'collective right for all Sami' (ibid.). Nevertheless, the belonging to one of the samebys still constitutes a strict necessity in order to make use of this right. Green determines that the Act of 1928 including the division between Sámi who are part of a sameby and those who are not, still shapes the politics of Sámi today. One aspect of this is the impossibility 'of a sound collective Sami identity': 'it is the State that, through this legislation, wrongly defined who is Sami and who is not' (ibid., 53).

3. Theory

With my project I aim to follow what Laurajane Smith (2012), founding president of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies, in her 'Manifesto of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies', understands under Critical Heritage Studies. Not only in light of the short time of on-site research, I surely only managed to pay attention to some of her claims. Nevertheless, three aspects of her short but inspiring document turned out to be of particular importance for the way I wanted to approach the heritage discourse.

Firstly, Smith points out that heritage (making, defining and managing) is always a political act, intertwined with complex power relations. 'Nationalism, imperialism, colonialism,

cultural elitism, Western triumphalism, social exclusion based on class and ethnicity, and the fetishising of expert knowledge' (ibid.) are the phenomena, Smith regards as pervading the conventional heritage discourse and practices of heritage making.

Secondly and bound to the first aspect, the author argues that marginalised people - often from the Global South - and their interests have long been excluded from the discourse around heritage in favour of the recognition of dominant, more influential people who are regularly also the benefitters from heritage making. Instead of the Authorised Heritage Discourse, which massively shaped heritage studies so far by preferring only a certain type of sites (material, prestigious, often Western), the perspectives and interests of the former excluded must be centred, thus truly democratising heritage making (ibid.).

Thirdly, Smith emphasises the practice of questioning 'the received wisdom of what heritage is' as well as the searching for dialogue not only between academics, but also between researchers and communities. Part of this is an opening up of the heritage discourse to new disciplines and studies such as social anthropology or public history, an endeavour the UNESCO research class certainly aims for already as well.

Finally, I take Stuart Hall's (1994) concept of cultural identity as a starting point and as a working definition. Hall understands cultural identity not as a fixed, essential, historic identity, but rather as a dynamic positioning. The latter gets negotiated on the basis of history, narratives, myths, cultural influences and power structures over and over again. An unambiguous cultural identity that does not change thus appears as an illusion.

4. Research Design, Data Collection and Research Question

The time frame of the present study considerably determined the research design as well as the modes of data collection. This certainly came with a couple of dilemmas. The most obvious dilemma might be the need to intensively prepare the temporally limited stay in Sweden while simultaneously trying to preserve a possibly extensive openness for the topics and people I encountered. Not only the progress of the World Heritage seminar but also other instances as for example the application for a grant necessitated the formulation of definite research questions. This meant that I prepared the project over a length of about three months, accompanied by the World Heritage seminar and thus by weekly discussions and interdisciplinary input. Soon it became clear that I would conduct a qualitative research since I wanted to get to the certainly complex views my informants have on Lapland and World Heritage.

The data collection followed five routes. First of all, I conducted problem centred interviews, that were structured to varying degrees, at the Naturum Visitor Centre in Stora Sjöfallet and at the Sámi Education Centre in Jokkmokk. Three out of five interviewees self-identified as being Sámi. Moreover, I had countless informal conversations, made field observations and extensive literature search both at Naturum and at Ája, the Sámi archive and library in Jokkmokk. Lastly, I visited and documented four different exhibitions about Sámi, two of them being in Stockholm and two up north. Out of these five approaches, the interviews and informal conversations clearly constitute the most important source of information for my research question, followed by the field observations and literature review. The exhibitions ultimately played a rather small role for the development and evaluation of my research question but nevertheless helped me diving in the topic.

During the whole process of data collection, my perspective surely was influenced not only by the seminar during the summer term, but also by my occupation with Laponia beforehand. Nevertheless, I could observe how my questions got more and more focused with every day in Sweden. While I collected a lot of information about the Sámi in general when I visited the two exhibitions in Stockholm, I was concentrating on two or three main aspects in the end of my time in Sweden. While I talked with my informants about literally anything that came up in our informal conversations, my questions became more precise with every interview. All the forms of preparation, literature, conversations and observations ultimately led to my final research question already mentioned in the introduction: In how far does the UNESCO continue to pursue mechanisms known as characterising the relation between Sámi and the Swedish State, namely the confident definition of who and what is *traditionally* and *authentically* Sámi?

5. Results

In this part of the report I want to introduce you to the results of my interviews and observations that refer to exactly the question posed in the preceding passage. One of the challenges during the evaluation of the collected data surely was the abundance of interesting topics and important statements which made it hard to truly filter out the ones directly touching upon my primary research question. Nevertheless, two key concepts - in one form or another - repeatedly came up and therefore constitute the core of the results I want to present here: on the one hand, the striving for and creation of unambiguousness regarding to Sámi identity that various actors

pursue and on the other hand, the contradictions that come with the attempts to create unambiguousness in light of the variety Sámi - and any other - culture embodies.

In the second chapter I tried to trace the extensive history of the Swedish state determining not only who is Sámi, but also which occupations and rights characterise Sámi people. Moreover, I portrayed how the UNESCO, in its criteria to ascribe World Heritage status to Lapponia, determined what the *authentic* way to herd reindeer - that moreover does not harm nature - is and what kind of reindeer herding should be preserved, in doubt with the help of 'management actions' (UNESCO: *Laponian Area* 2019). What are the views and perceptions concerning the triad of the Swedish state, the UNESCO and Sámi identity and culture my informants shared with me?

The Swedish State and the UNESCO creating unambiguousness

First of all, two of my informants impressively traced the separation of Sámi forced by Swedish politicians and policies. It was the latter who determined that there 'was one group called Laps at that time which was doing reindeer herding and these were the only ones in Sweden, and *they* were the Laps' (RB 1-3, my own emphasis). Building on this, Emelia hints to the fact that this inflexibility, this rigidity of splitting the 'Laps' and everyone else does not do justice to the transformability she sees as essential trait of the Sámi people. She says: 'The Sámi used to say that the Sámi culture is a living culture, it changes over time and that's probably why we're actually here' (EH 33-34). Emelia underlines two more aspects, namely the heteronomy of this process when she points out the 'colonisation politics' which did not take into consideration the views of the Sámi in that matter (EH 41-45) as well as the internalisation of this division: '[I]t has become our mindset in some way, [...] this segregation' (EH 56-58).

Interestingly, Emelia describes a structurally similar process when referring to the ascription of World Heritage status through the UNESCO: 'They are using the [...] white eyes lenses, [...] not the lenses of the Sámi. [...] And I think to understand the culture [...], coming from Brussels or where it is, describing some culture [must be hard, L.K.]' (EH 442-446). Rita talks about a time frame of over five hundred years in which exactly this situation of segregation was shaped. She mentions that, at times, if there was a hard winter and Sámi had to settle down because their reindeer had died, they were required to change their names, to 'forget how to be with [their] relatives, and to be a good Swede' (RB 71-73). She describes the scars these practices have inflicted on the Sámi people as well as the conflicts in the Sámi community especially the Reindeer Herding Act in 1971 led to:

[I]t was really hard because at that time, the Sámi people, so the reindeer people, started to read the law. [...] But we have to remember that it was the Swedish politicians in five hundred years who have worked to come here and seventy-one, the new reindeer law did a lot of scars inside the people. And when we got the Sámi Parliament twenty years later, the Parliament started to unite the Sámi people. But I will still say it's a scar inside here because of the law because many families had to leave the sameby and did not belong to the sameby' (RB 74-84).

Additionally, there was and is no Act for the Sámi who were or are not doing reindeer herding to refer to, which further strengthened the imbalance between Sámi in reindeer herding and other Sámi (cf. EH 86-95).

Hinting to the Social Darwinism prevalent in the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, Rita underlines the politicians' aim to - piece by piece - rob the Sámi of their language, then of their culture and finally of the reindeer herding (cf. RB 108-134). According to Rita, Sámi lost their modes of thinking and of treating one another during that time (RB 123-124). She concludes:

So today we have to research, how is our culture, to take back values, how we are to each other and how we see our respect of the nature. Of course, then the question came: What is the Sámi culture? If I have lost the language and I'm living perhaps here in Jokkmokk, and for a long time, my ancestors maybe haven't told me that we're Sámi people and then we do research and find it out: [...] I want to belong to the Sámi people but what am I going to do? [...] And then came the question: What is the Sámi culture? (RB 125-134)

Sámi culture between unambiguousness and diversity

This last question surely is anything but easy to answer which gets reflected in the answers my informants found to it as well. Their attempts to answer it move between the stance that Sámi culture is relatively easy to define, exhibiting some undisputed traits and cornerstones, and the stance that Sámi culture is so diverse that it is almost impossible to talk about *the* Sámi culture at all. Let me begin with the first view. Underlining this, Rita, for example, repeatedly distinguishes Sámi values as well as Sámi people from Western people. She points out the necessity to stick to the 'real Sámi way' (RB 222) - especially in upbringing - which she experienced to be rather subtle, unconscious values that nevertheless hugely inform her thinking and acting. The following passage clearly emphasises Rita's moving between on the one hand, the inclusion of 'everyone who wants to be a Sámi (282) and on the other hand, the ongoing focus on the reindeer herding Sámi as the *true* Sámi:

Today I would say, [...] we're all Sámi and reindeer herding is *one* small table [...]. So, these people who are living here, they are reindeer herding here and they are living here in the culture and the other Sámi, for me- [...] I think everyone who wants to be a Sámi, that's okay for me. But [...] then, I cannot say I'm an Italian, if I don't learn Italian and learn about the Italian culture and food [...]. So, these people, for me, of course they are Sámi people, but I think they start a journey and they are searching for family and they search cultures and today Sámi culture also can be in Stockholm, Oslo or Germany. The reindeer is only *one* group [...] but I think a lot of

the culture, values- when you learn the language, you can take it with you because the language is very important in every culture. [...] I think you have to learn Sámi language, when you talk Sámi language, you're automatically coming to talk about culture [...]. (RB 274-298, my own emphasis).

Sámi culture, here, appears to be not necessarily linked to the practice of reindeer herding, but definitely to mastering Sámi language and thus gaining a deep understanding of the values that are manifested in this language. Beyond these values as well as the 'social codex' that is mentioned several times (EH 138, 164, 167, 208, 311) and surely constitutes the key element of culture for my informants, the costumes and the flag, the Sámi anthem and food play an important but subordinate role. In parallel, regarding the work Rita and Emelia do at the Sámi Education Centre in Jokkmokk, they reveal that it is the 'search for everyone's own Sámi identity' (RB 149) that must be foregrounded - and not only the handicraft. Emelia points out that not all Sámi are eager to learn about Sámi culture or language, however having 'a strong identity being a Sámi with a lot of other knowledge' (EH 303) which they share with members of the samebys. She thus presents the latter group of people 'not [as] a static group' but as open for exchange (EH 308).

Besides, I found loads of statements underlining the diversity of Sámi culture in my data, especially diversity in terms of occupations and places of residence. My interviewees repeatedly underline that Sámi can live in the country as well as in the city, can be 'reindeer herders, teachers [and] doctors' (RB 10-11). Rita and Emelia equally point out that this is the reason why one cannot equate Sámi culture with reindeer herding culture. At the same time, Lapponia encompasses above all areas that *are* characterised by reindeer herding. In light of this, it seems understandable for my informants that UNESCO and the people who worked for the ascription of World Heritage status to Lapponia put that much emphasis on this part of their culture - and not on the abundance of other cultural expressions connected to Sámi people (cf. RB and EH 360-397).

Grasping Sámi (reindeer herding) culture or: Reindeer herding as a 'blessing'

The interview with Rita and Emelia indicates that it is the need to reduce the complexity of culture, the attempt to *grasp* Sámi culture - from the outside as well as from within - that caused the applying actors and the UNESCO to focus on reindeer herding. Emelia, at one point in the interview, notes that 'we have been talking for fifty minutes about what Sámi culture is and we can't give you an example of a few sentences' (EH 412-415). Simultaneously, my informants repeatedly drew my attention to the role reindeer herding plays for the formation of identity for many (young) Sámi. Reindeer herding as comprehensively shaping family and

community, work routine and the experience of the seasons, upbringing and values of a Sámi community was characterised as a blessing - a blessing, 'because the reindeers and the work with the reindeers, the traditions are very strong. You have a lot of terminology for the reindeer herding, fur, the antlers, the snow, it's so much knowledge bound to the reindeer' (EH 158-162). In this understanding, reindeer herding obviously functions as an enabler of identification, of learning a particular social codex and cultural practice, thus facilitating children and adults to *grasp* what Sámi culture is. The latter then - for Sámi children and for the UNESCO alike - solidifies itself in the practice of reindeer herding with all the values, vocabulary and knowledge attached to it. The children of reindeer herders are 'blessed' (EH 158, 163) because they have access to this rather clear mark of Sámi culture and do not have to search for it the way non-reindeer herding children have to. Nevertheless, Emelia points out that parents with a strong Sámi identity and knowledge about the traditions and the social codex can guide their children in finding their Sámi identity although they are not into reindeer herding. This underlines a certain variety of living and learning Sámi culture in its diverse expressions.

For me, it was an important turn when I realised that the cultural practice of reindeer herding fundamentally creates clarity and belonging for Sámi and acts as a marking of differentiation as well. Rita, in particular, describes how different children who grow up in a reindeer herding family are from those who are growing up without reindeer herding. She hints to the fact that the former are not allowed to talk loudly when the family is working with the reindeer and thus learns a specific set of values - one that is closely bound to discipline and that is different to the values learnt by non-reindeer herding Sámi children (cf. RB 172-188). Here, a parallel between UNESCO's necessity to *grasp* culture and the identification process of Sámi through reindeer herding becomes obvious.

'The way we look at Sámi'

The ambiguity of emphasising reindeer herding as main trait of Sámi culture expresses itself in particular in the simultaneity of on the one hand, legitimately trying to capture Sámi culture and on the other hand, othering Sámi by these efforts to identify their culture. In the interviews it became obvious that this happens not only as part of the UNESCO's criteria for ascribing World Heritage status but is also discussed regarding the representation of Sámi culture in Lapponia. This includes for example the signs introducing the Stora Sjöfallet national park or the representation of Sámi in the Naturum visitor centre in Lapponia. One of the employees of this centre brought up the challenge to educate people about how the Sámi lived

and how reindeer herding was done in the past but at the same time avoiding conveying an 'outdated picture' (AH 212). Anna mentions the old tipi and the turf hut that are exhibited close to the path from the parking lot to Naturum. Most reindeer herders today live in mountain huts during migration times and Anna wants to educate people without othering Sámi as a community that has not changed over the past decades and centuries. Therefore, they, for example, include phone bags made of reindeer leather in their exhibition of traditional crafts at Naturum in order to underline the continuous interaction of crafts and time (cf. AH 180-194).

Nevertheless, the tourist gaze, the tourists' expectations towards *experiencing culture* when visiting a World Heritage site, surely impact the presentation of these sites. Anna repeatedly mentions that they rather avoid satisfying these expectations and that they see it as their task to 'take them in and kindly guide them through, to open their eyes and maybe broaden their perspective of what a reindeer herder is and [...] how it actually works because for a lot of people [...] [it] is sometimes hard to grasp' (AH 217-221). Anna does not think that this contradicts interactive offers such as baking bread over the open fire, as long as a temporal classification is made, and the visitors learn that bread is baked on an electrical hob today. One remark particularly stood out to me, namely her comparison of Lapponia to the World Heritage site of Birka, an archaeological site from the Viking Age, concerning the use of *modern technology*. Anna emphasises the indifference with which the debate around snowmobiles, drones and helicopters in reindeer herding in Lapponia is held. She mentions that 'in Birka, they had a farmer there as well and nobody commented on that farmer, like driving a tractor around in Birka. I think the technology aspect is also connected to the way that we look at Sámi. There's often this perception that the Sámi should be connected to the land, technology is not part of that image' (AH 582-588). It is the common discursive connection of indigenous people with a specific attachment to their land and nature which informs visitors' expectations as well as other actors' requests towards Sámi regarding *living in accordance with nature*.

The connection of indigenous people with a special affiliation to their land and with a particular form of standstill has a long history. In 1917, a member of the Swedish cabinet, Steno Johannes Stenberg, determined: 'The settled life leads to, among the members of the family that do not join in the migrations but stay at home, the fact that they lose interest in the reindeer herd; the interest in reindeer herding thereby ceases to be a concern for the whole family. The whole mode of thought changes; it becomes that of a settler and not that of a Lapp' (quoted in Amft 2000 in Green 2009, 51). This short passage accurately expresses the perspective that indigenous people are not supposed to take part in cultural, social or economic change. They

are not meant to benefit from certain innovations. Although the discussions today are surely no longer about the question who is entitled to settle down, debates around the *real* way of reindeer herding and the use of technical means structurally tend to follow these old patterns and images.

6. Discussion

I will now discuss the aspects of my findings I consider to be most important regarding the UNESCO as an actor of cultural politics. First of all, I come to the conclusion that there are continuities of creating unambiguousness in Lapponia concerning the three questions who is considered Sámi, what occupation is *traditional* for Sámi and how *authentic* reindeer herding has to be executed. It was the Swedish state which defined the clear-cut community of Sámi without any intersections with the Swedish settlers in the policies of the 19th and the 20th century. It was the Swedish National Heritage Board in the course of their applications and the UNESCO in their ascription of World Heritage status to Lapponia that figured out what is authentic in Lapponia and what is worthy and in need of protection. Thereby, they necessarily prioritised some characteristics which shall be protected in a specific form over others. And it is some Sámi people themselves who today feel and observe differences between reindeer herding Sámi, whom they attribute a specific social codex, values and behaviour, and the other Sámi who 'start a journey' (RB 286-287).

Secondly and directly linked to this conclusion, it is vitally important to stress that the mechanisms, the intentions and the consequences of determining cultural practices such as the reindeer herding by Sámi drastically vary: Whether Sámi themselves, the SNHB, the UNESCO or the Swedish state define authenticity matters. It makes a difference whether the consequence is that languages are not allowed to be spoken anymore or that a turf hut which is not inhabited any more might run the risk to convey an outdated picture of Sámi. It makes a difference whether Sámi are forced to lose contact to their communities or that there is a discourse around *modern technologies* in reindeer herding. This is definitely not to say that the latter aspects are not highly relevant and need to be discussed with a strong emphasis on multiple Sámi perspectives. The current discourse and policies around such topics surely are determined by long-lasting stereotypes, and maybe even, as some informants called it, colonial practices. There are surely feelings of powerlessness regarding the continuing perceived omnipotence of the Swedish state in matters of land-use, rights and resources (cf. ES). In the past as well as in the present these issues include economic realities, social marginalisation and representation alike. Nevertheless, it is essential to differentiate the changing power structures and the levels

of agency that determine processes such as the ascription of World Heritage status to Lapponia. Even in this process Sámi did not play a major role from the beginning on. Their participation started only in the third application and covered a much shorter period of time than the applications focusing on nature alone. Nevertheless, the participation and perspectives of Sámi were included in the end and Sámi today not only occupy half of the seats but also the chair of the Board that manages Lapponia.

Lastly, I would like to point out that the reasons why applicants for World Heritage status concentrate on *the other*, the *special*, the *traditional*, and the *authentic* are worth to be rethought. For the ascription follows a certain logic that obviously utterly relies on the firm determination of that which is simultaneously so unique and endangered that it is worthy of protection. Applicants are expected to follow exactly this logic when preparing for an application. And this is - for both the applicants and the UNESCO - easier with traits such as the cultural practice of a specific form of reindeer herding than with immaterial characteristics such as a social codex.

Regarding possible future work on Lapponia, an occupation with the interaction and field of tension between different forms of recognition could be fruitful. During my research on Lapponia I often encountered the question why Lapponia was ascribed World Heritage status on the basis of the Sámi living on and with this land for centuries while the Swedish state still refuses to ratify the ILO convention 169 'Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention'. My interviewees suggested that this is, inter alia, because of Article 15 which safeguards indigenous peoples' rights to the resources of their land (cf. ilo.org 2017). The land in Lapponia is extremely rich of resources, its lakes are extensively used for hydro power systems by the Swedish state-owned energy company Vattenfall and around Lapponia are mines. The economic benefits for the state are so valuable that Sweden does not want to risk losing them by ratifying the convention. A future project could therefore deal with the different modes of recognition through various actors in the Laponian context.

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